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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide, written by experienced teachers of adults in Philadelphia, describes a full curriculum for intermediate-level adult literacy students (students who have basic reading skills). The curriculum is based on the assumption that adult students deserve a broad, well-rounded education. The guide also discusses teaching techniques and some teaching theory. The guide is organized in five sections. First comes a general discussion about teaching reading and writing skills. The second part of the guide describes books in six subject areas: grammar, literature, history, science, mathematics, and General Educational Development (GED). For each subject area, some recommended textbooks are described along with techniques for using them. Full bibliographic information for these books follows this section. The fourth section explains the philosophy of teaching adults and is followed by a section that tells how to use public libraries with adult new readers. (KC)

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CURRICULUM GUIDE:

Books and Methods for Teaching Adult Basic Education

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October, 1986

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CURRICULUM GUIDE:
Books and Methods for Teaching Adult Basic Education

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INTRODUCTION

Philadelphia, a city rich in history and culture, is also a city with its share of problems. One of these problems is illiteracy. Estimates of the number of low reading level adults vary, ranging from 200,000 to 500,000 people out of a population of 1.6 million.

Philadelphia is, however, a city with many resources, and some of those resources have been directed toward helping illiterate adults.

In 1965, when the staff of the Free Library of Philadelphia first began addressing the issue of adult illiteracy in the city, they found that a number of agencies and organizations were already hard at work teaching and tutoring adults. The library, it was decided, could best serve the Philadelphia commuity by supplementing rather than duplicating the services which were already in place. What they needed, adult educators said, was books.

So the Free Library began the process of locating, reviewing, and buying books. In 1967, the library applied for and received an LSCA grant to set up a program to provide instructional materials, primarily in print, to agencies, organizations, and individuals who were trying to teach adults to read. Federal funding continued for 3 years. At the end of that time, the Free Library took over funding for what had come to be called the Reader Development Program. This program, which has undergone a number of changes in location and staff, continues to provide the same essential service it did beginning in 1967--books, in quantity, consumable, to whoever in Philadelphia needed them to teach adults.

In April of 1983, literacy education for adults in Philadelphia entered a new era with the appointment of a Mayor's Commission on Literacy. When an Executive Director was appointed to the Commission in January, 1984, a huge literacy campaign was begun, focused on making Philadelphians aware of the problem and on recruiting and training volunteer tutors. In addition, Commission staff identified adult education programs already in place and created a directory of programs and services. When local agencies could not keep pace with volunteer training, the Commission also identified a cadre of educators to act as trainers for volunteer tutors who continue to be recruited.

During the same period, as demands for learning materials grew, the Mayor's Commission sought and obtained foundation funds not only to staff its own operation but also to provide a substantial supplement ($75,000 per year for 3 years) to the Reader Development Program and part-time staff to process the new materials.

Free Library and Reader Development staff watched these new developments with great interest. Keith Doms, Free Library President and Director, has served on the Mayor's Commission on Literacy since its inception. Other staff members, including Melissa Buckingham, then Head of the Reader Development Program, provided technical assistance in the areas of identification of and background about agencies as well as instructional materials.

In the spring of 1984, it became evident that a large gap existed in service to undereducated adults in Philadelphia. Volunteer programs, both locally and nationally, focus their efforts on adults who need basic literacy instruction. This is the population most in need. However, as such programs grow and succeed, the students they teach join the population of students who are the most numerous, those who read on the 5th to 8th grade level.

At the same time, many agencies in Philadelphia that serve adults who read on a 5th to 8th grade level were experiencing drastic funding cuts, due to a decrease in federal funding. (Until 1986 Pennsylvania funded no adult education programs.)

This combination of circumstances convinced staff at the Free Library that it was time once again to turn to LSCA for demonstration funding. So in 1984, the Free Library submitted a proposal suggesting that one way to address the needs of 5th to 8th grade level adults is to inform volunteers how to teach at this level, as well as at the basic skills or literacy level.

The method selected was to hire 2 experienced adult educators to run classes for students on the 5th to 8th grade level, often referred to as intermediate or adult basic education (ABE) level. Classes were to be held in branch libraries in two very different neighborhoods. The teachers were to field test both instructional materials and instructional techniques in these ABE classes.

The result of that project is this curriculum guide. It is designed to describe a full curriculum for intermediate level students; that is, for students who have basic reading skills. This curriculum is based on the assumption that adult students deserve a broad, well-rounded education.

This guide also discusses teaching techniques and some teaching theory, because the people who wrote it think that these are often as important to successful learning as curriculum is.

The guide was written by Bridget Martin, Steve Sayre, and Melissa Buckingham. Bridget and Steve have both taught adults in a variety of settings, including the Center for Literacy. Bridget has experience as a tutor-trainer and curriculum developer. Steve has experience in writing and legal services. They were the program teachers. Melissa has been evaluating adult education materials and writing about them since 1971.

As these three prople worked on the project, from August, 1985 through September, 1986, their ideas about the content of the guide grew and changed, but the basic concepts remain the same: the major audience is tutors and teachers of adults who are at the intermediate reading level. The authors assume that those tutors and teachers have some previous experience with adult learners, either from previous tutoring or at least from some systematic training sessions. Also, we have addressed ourselves to a Philadelphia audience, but we believe that the guide will be useful,with a few adaptations, in other places as well.

The guide is organized as follows. First comes a general discussion about teaching reading skills and writing skills. This discussion is basic to the rest of the guide. It will help you to teach all of the subjects covered here as well as any other subject you and your adult students may want to tackle.

The second part of the guide describes books in six subject areas: grammar, literature, history, science, mathematics, and GED preparation (GED stands for General Educational Development, and is the official name of the high school equivalency examination.). For each subject area we have described some of the good textbooks we have used and some techniques for using them. Full bibliographic information for all of these books follows this section.

Because we know that many tutors don't have experience teaching intermediate-level adults, we have included a rather long section which might best be defined as philosophy of teaching.

And because this project was funded by federal library funds administered through the State Library of Pennsylvania we have also included a section that explains how to use public libraries with adult new readers.

And now a note about style. We have chosen to be fairly informal in our approach, because we thought that would be most understandable. That solved some, but not all, of our pronoun problems. Where we could, we used plural forms; where we couldn't, we have alternated between he and she. We hope this is not confusing; it seemed to be the fairest thing to do.

Reading Comprehension

Most reading skills textbooks seem to be written on the assumption that working on comprehension means completing multiple choice questions at the end of reading passages. In grade school, children learning to read spend a lot of time finding the main idea, reciting details of the story, making inferences, putting events of the story in sequence, drawing conclusions, and so forth. We agree that these are important reading skills. We think, however, that in many textbooks attempts to develop these skills are inadequate.

The multiple choice format, for example, does not encourage original thought or initiative on the part of the teacher or students. It does not help students develop their comprehension skills as much as it teaches them how to answer multiple choice questions. It overshadows the real purposes of reading: to learn, to get information, to enjoy a story, to enrich oneself, and to grow in many other ways.

Another major problem with this view of comprehension is that it implies that meaning and significance lie entirely within the text. The student constantly refers back to the reading passage to answer questions. The wealth of background knowledge that every student has is ignored. Comprehension starts with the reader and therefore starts before the passage is read. To develop a student's comprehension, begin with the student.

Some students may need work on comprehension skills such as drawing conclusions or putting events in sequence. The multiple choice questions may be a place to start, but you should try to guide students toward independent thinking, drawing their own conclusions and writing them in their own words.

The following are some strategies your students can use to develop their comprehension skills. They are addressed to students, and you may want to photocopy them so that your students have them available at home.

Preview. Thinking about and discussing what you already know

about the subject and what questions come to your mind helps with comprehension and concentration. Make a list of questions you want answered in the reading selection and write the answers as you find them.

Make use of titles, subtitles, pictures, illustrations and captions. Predict what the story will be about. This helps focus the mind on the subject.

If there are comprehension questions at the end, and if you want to use them, read the questions before reading the passage. The necessary information will then stand out as you read.

Monitoring comprehension. It saves time if you check your comprehension while you're reading rather than waiting until you've read the entire passage. Stop reading after a couple of paragraphs and summarize it in one or two sentences. If you're not understanding it ask yourself: Did I preview the article? Am I reading too fast? Am I concentrating?

Write down what you **think** it's about and push on. Maybe it will clear up. If not, rereading will help. Stop after each paragraph and write a one sentence summary.

Unknown words. Some unknown words can be skipped over if they are not essential for the meaning. Technical words may be defined in the beginning of a passage or in a glossary at the back of the book. Use the context to figure words out -- make a guess and see if it makes sense within the sentence and the passage as a whole. If necessary, ask a teacher, another student, or somebody you would feel comfortable asking. You may want to look the word up in the dictionary. However, frequent stopping and looking up words can interfere with comprehension. To build independence as a reader it is necessary that you trust your judgment.

Use what you've read right away. This helps you remember what you've read. What you do with it depends on what you read and why you read it. Writing a brief summary of the whole article may be sufficient. For other kinds of texts, making an outline, diagram, chart, or map of the article would be good. If it's a biographical or historical

reading a time line could help you to hold the important information or ideas in your mind.

Evaluate what you read. Did you learn anything? Was the article clear and well-written? Why or why not?

Not all readings are worth spending a lot of time on. They may be poorly written, or of no interest to you. Don't be afraid to abandon something you're not enjoying.

Integrate the new knowledge. How does it fit in with what you already knew? Does it agree with what you thought before, or have you revised your thoughts? Does it remind you of anything else about yourself or your life experience? Did anything in the reading selection surprise you?

The activities you choose to do will depend partly on what you're reading. Not all of them are appropriate for every kind of reading.

Writing

Writing could be the most difficult thing to get students to do and may be the hardest thing to teach. We urge you to resist the temptation to avoid or abandon writing, or worse, to teach spelling, grammar or punctuation and call it writing. By writing we mean just that -- engaging in the act of putting your thoughts or feelings on paper. The importance of writing cannot be overstated. It supports the development of reading and thinking skills. Self-expression through writing helps students develop the feeling that their thoughts and their experiences are valuable, not only to themselves but to others. Writing accomplishes this in a way that oral discussion in class does not. In addition, when you respond to student writing you are individualizing instruction.

You may encounter resistance to writing within yourself as well as in the student. You may not write regularly, other than lists, notes, and an occasional letter. Likewise, students probably will not be regular writers and will most likely be very self-conscious about their spelling or handwriting. We all have too much experience of writing school assignments, handing them in to the teacher, and getting them back with spelling and grammar corrections made in red ink, "dripping with blood" as one colleague put it. There were probably too few positive and encouraging comments about the content of what we had writtein.

And so the ABE student usually approaches writing with trepidation. You can reduce these feelings of apprehension and encourage students (and yourself) to write by looking at the content first, although it will be hard to resist correcting all the spelling and grammar right away. The most important thing for students is to get their thoughts down on paper before they forget them. Then they can return to it to make revisions for better organization, expression, spelling, grammar, and style.

Here are some specific recommendations for writing:

- Make writing a part of every lesson. There won't be much improvement if you only do it once in a while.
- Write while your students write and share your writing with your students. Encourage your students to share their writing with one another.

- Allow students to ask each other or you how to spell words. This is the time for expression of thoughts and feelings, not the time to teach the "mechanics" of writing.

For ideas on what to write about, use pictures, class discussions, and whatever you're reading in class. Students can respond in writing to literature, history, science, and other subjects. They can compose original word problems in mathematics.

You may want to set aside a certain time in every class for journal writing. This could be a forum for students to write about what they are learning, what they want to learn, and how they feel about class. Or it can be a time for free writing, when the students write about anything they wish.

When responding to student writing:

- Find at least one positive thing to say about the writing.
- Help students to revise by asking them to read it to you.

  Then ask questions like:

  "What do you mean when you...."

  "Please tell me more about...."
- Students should proofread and self-correct as much as possible. Work on one kind of mistake with one piece of writing. Look for a pattern. For instance, if there are no periods or question marks, work on that. Of if one word is misspelled over and over, work on that. If the piece is full of all kinds of mistakes, don't work on all the mistakes at once. When making corrections, keep in mind what you have covered in lessons.

Some mistakes will just stay there. Not every piece has to be perfect. This, of course, depends on the purpose of what students are writing. For example, consider the purpose of a grocery list as opposed to that of a job application.

You may want students to share their writing with one another.

First, make sure that each student is comfortable with the idea of sharing. Then, take the writing home and type or print it. Use your judgment about how much correcting to do. It is probably a good idea to correct all spelling errors and most punctuation errors. Make photocopies for each student.

Finally, some writing, particularly journal writing, is not to be corrected at all. The students should have control over what happens to their writing.

Using student writing in class along with your own writing may be one of the best ways open to you to encourage students' learning.

Grammar and punctuation

Studying grammar requires a student to look at language as an object, an entity that can be manipulated or played with. Grammar is somewhat abstract and unnatural. The word "table" suddenly is not just what we think of -- a flat surface that we eat or do work at, or that holds junk mail. It is suddenly also something called a noun. And things that do not seem to be related in any way, like "table" and "whale", have something in common -- they are both nouns. Dictionary and connotational meanings have to be suspended and a different aspect of the word considered. It is difficult for a student who is very unaccustomed to working with language in this way to start to think in this mode. For instance, students will often call words like "blizzard", "football", and "conversation", verbs. These words describe very active things and many students think of them as actions rather than things, which are usually inanimate. Lots of practice is required for most students to be able to put words quickly into categories like noun, verb, subject, preposition, predicate and adjective.

ABE students are often very intimidated by and at the same time motivated to learn grammar. They feel they need knowledge of it to write well, or they know they need it for the GED test. It is easy to get carried away with it. There is so much that could be studied. To master more than the basics required for writing in standard English or to pass the GED test would take an enormous commitment of time. Don't let it take over every class. And be aware of the limitations in your own knowledge of grammar.

Many elements of grammar are covered in GED preparation books. These are the things you should concentrate on with students who want to take the GED test. Students may ask about things that are not included in the book, and you should answer them to the best of your ability. Some of the texts listed below may help.

It is not necessary to teach grammar in any strict order, although it helps to be logical. For instance, cover identification of subjects and verbs in sentences before teaching subject-verb agreement.

There are many books you can use to reacquaint your student with grammar. Contemporary Books publishes a two-book series called *Building Basic Skills in Writing*. These books have a nice layout and make grammar look logical and simple. They provide good, specific examples and the exercises are carefully explained. *Building Basic Skills in Writing* covers some aspects of language that are not necessary for students who speak English fluently. For instance, there is a section on mass nouns where the student is instructed that "He speaks some French" is correct and "He speaks many French" is not correct.

Another resource, the Troubleshooter Series, includes several volumes which provide useful grammar instruction. *Sentence Strength, Punctuation Power,* and English Achievement are especially helpful because they provide more practice than most other texts.

Spelling

There are many workbooks available to help your student learn the correct spelling of words. However, completing workbook pages is not sufficient. In order for your students to master spelling, there must be plenty of opportunity to use what they learn. They must use spelling in writing or the knowledge won't stick with them. Also, many students' spelling improves with increased experience with reading.

We have found two Troubleshooter books to be very helpful. *Spelling Action* has two sections on homophones, word endings, plurals of nouns, and commonly misspelled words.

Word Attack teaches root words, prefixes and suffixes. This is helpful because it shows students patterns in spelling. For instance, when your student can spell a root word like "nation" you can teach other related words: national, nationality, nationalize. Don't be concerned that the sound of the "a" changes. The words have the same meaning root, and this will help students read and spell words. The section on syllables may be very confusing for some students. Unless this work is clearly very helpful to your student, we recommend that you skip it and use the rest of the book.

Learning how to spell does eventually involve memorizing. It is important to include words the student wants to know in every list he or she must memorize.

Literature

If students were tutored before coming to ABE instruction, chances are pretty good that they read some stories or short novels that were written specifically for adult new readers. While this was probably very enjoyable to them, many students have a strong desire to read a whole book or "real" book. There are many reasons for reading literature with your students. Poetry, prose, and drama appear on the GED test. Reading literature will broaden their reading experience. Reading literature will help them recognize references to characters, places, events and themes in other reading they do. But we think the main reason to read literature is that it can be one of the most satisfying things you do together.

Fortunately, there is an almost endless source of material available at your local library. For instructional purposes, the *Spotlight on Literature* series is designed to provide a good overview of classic American and European literature at a low reading level. Unfortunately, this means a lot of the material is abridged and edited for this purpose. The good news is that many students are inspired to borrow the unabridged edition from the library. Authors such as Chekhov, Irving, Chaucer, Poe and Dickinson are included. The series also includes works by contemporary black writers like Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Margaret Walker and Martin Luther King. There are single works by Native American and Japanese authors but no other minority writers are represented.

Each selection is followed by multiple choice questions about characterizations, plot, metaphors, setting, etc.. These questions are not challenging. The most that is gained by doing them is some understanding of literary terms, which may be of interest to the student or may be helpful on the GED test. There is also a glossary of these terms in the back of each book in the series.

Although there is a wide range of short stories and poetry there are no plays in the *Spotlight* series. We think you will probably want to supplement the series with a short, well-known play. Reading drama is very valuable in the ABE classroom. The dialogue is often easy to read and understand. Drama is active and realistic. It is happening now and is not a passive or abstract description as other types of literature are.

These features facilitate students' getting involved in their reading. Some students may even want to act out some parts of plays.

Drama is an unfamiliar genre for most ABE students. You will need to guide students through recognizing and understanding the differences between dialogue, stage directions, and narration.

Plays are written to be performed. Before deciding on a play to read, you and the students should check what plays will be on television (be sure to check public television listings), or performed in the area, or are available on audio or video cassette at your local library. The reading of a play will be greatly enhanced if accompanied by watching or listening to a performance.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* was read in one of our classes. The dialogue is very accessible and the length manageable. Many students had seen the movie version, but even those who were not familiar with it quickly became engaged in the story. It is a story many students identified with. The reading of the play was accompanied by listening to parts of it on an audio cassette borrowed from the library. A discussion of racial tensions around local housing problems added immediacy to the issues raised. One student was able to take advantage of seeing the play performed locally.

The other genre which you and your students may want to enjoy together is the full length novel. It may be the first time for some students to read a text that is longer than a few pages. You may try bringing a few books that you have enjoyed to class and introducing them to the students. Read the first page of each book and let the students decide which book they want to read. It is very important to have students' input into the choice of literature that you read together. This is a necessary factor in motivating people to read through their lifetime, rather than just for class. Trying to persuade students to read something they don't want to is a good way to turn them off to reading. Furthermore, some people will never be avid readers or lovers of great literature, and they have every right not to be.

Encourage your students to respond to literature from their own experience. Some guiding questions could be:

- Do you identify with any characters in the story? Do any of them remind you of yourself or someone you know? What characters did you like or not like?
- Are any of the events similar to what has happened in your life? If you were in this situation what would you do?
- Did you like the story? Did it seem realistic or believable to you?

While discussing or writing about literature, some students will be very open about their personal experiences and others will not. Literature allows people to talk about themselves by discussing the characters' feelings, virtues, shortcomings, mistakes, failures, and moments of glory. Encourage, but don't force, your students to share their feelings about their reading.

History

Most students are interested in the whole range of subjects. A few, however, will have strong likes and dislikes, and, sometimes, history will be a subject in which they have no interest. If this really turns out to be the case, then the student should not study history. However, you should ask the student if he would be willing to try the books in the American Adventures series. Even students who had not liked history often like these books.

A student of ours, who, admittedly, has always liked history, is an older man who grew up in southeastern Virginia. He had to quit school in the second grade to help his father work their small tobacco farm. Finally, later in life, he found someone to tutor him and, over a period of two years, improved his reading to the point that his tutor felt that he would be able to read the American Adventures history books. The tutor gave the man the first volume, *A Nation Develops* and the man took it home with him. The next week he came into their meeting room, lay the book on the table, and said, "I love this book."

We do too. We like everything about this series. Each chapter, although short, is about a conceptually complete facet of American history. This allows you and your students to pick out certain themes in American history and to follow their course through history by reading, say, one chapter in one volume and another chapter in the other volume. We find that a certain amount of skipping through the chapters gives students a sense of the overall composition of American history and prevents their getting lost in details. We spend some time reading chronologically through history, some time skipping around following individual themes, and some time on projects apart from the books.

The books are very complete. The only things you will need to supplement them may be materials on geography and, depending on your students' backgrounds, some material on history other than American.

The books are well put together. They are a good size; the two volumes can be carried together in a book bag. They are beautiful to look at and are a pleasure to use. They are printed on good paper and are extremely well-illustrated with period paintings, drawings, photo-

graphs, and political cartoons, all of which are well-captioned. In the back of each book are documents from American history, a set of statistical tables, and maps of the world and of the United States.

The books are well-written. The writing is analytical without being overly complex, and it finds a tone between romantic respect and bitter criticism. The writing is critical and, we think, not culturally slanted. But it is also respectful of the accomplishments of individuals and of the collective efforts of various groups.

We like the writing, too, because it tends to focus on people more than concepts, because it focuses on the drama of societal development and the clash of different forces, and because it pauses to examine the suffering of the exploited, the enslaved, and the brutalized.

These books can be used in many ways. They are a good basis for encouraging students to express their own opinions and to tell stories from their own lives. Students will learn a lot about history by reading these books, for a lot of history is covered in them. In fact, so much is covered that you may not get through all the chapters. If this appears to be the case, we strongly suggest that you spend most of your time in the beginning chapters and the final chapters, as these do a very good job of describing the formation and structure of American government and the movements and developments of the past thirty years.

Science

Science is a subject which intimidates many ABE students. Scientific language is not only filled with difficult vocabulary, but is also exclusive of other kinds of language, such as that of religion, spirituality, or philosophy. Science tends to deal with empirical facts and attempts to define reality using a very limited set of experiences. This may sometimes come into conflict with what is real or important to the teacher or students. This is particularly evident when the subject of evolution comes up, or the question of how the world began. The Biblical explanations of the origins of the world are taken literally by many people. However, scientific writing does not treat these arguments seriously.

Yet teaching science provides great opportunities to draw on students' own knowledge of the world. Phenomena that science deals with are constantly taking place in the immediate environment. One example is a student's question about why it felt hot when she put her wet hand into a box of laundry detergent. Moreover, since adults have had experiences with physical ailments, lessons on biology or health may be of real interest to them.

Most people have a general idea of what is studied in chemistry, biology, physics, and earth science. A discussion of these words is a good introduction to studying science.

Do not limit teaching science to the books in the curriculum. Investigate what is going on at the public library and other community service agencies. Reading comprehension about the cardio-vascular system was enhanced by a presentation on high blood pressure by a doctor from the local health department clinic at the public library. Take a look at science periodicals found in many public library collections.

When possible, relate science lessons to what is happening at the time. For instance, one class studied the different kinds of energy during the Chernobyl crisis. We read about weather and meteorology right after hurricane Gloria blew through.

Most importantly, let studying science be fun.

New Readers Press publishes two science books for ABE students entitled *Matter and Energy* and *Earth Below and Sky Above.* The material in these books is organized well into topical units. These are good books to use to introduce a topic such as energy, or to provide a short piece on a topic that the student is interested in. However, the experiments described in these books are often clumsy, and many require materials not readily available outside of a school setting, such as an empty can of duplicating ink. Also, although the questions following each chapter sometimes help bring out the main points of the reading, more often they are uninspiring and, in an attempt to be short, end up being confusing.

Building Basic Skills in Science is geared more toward someone who will be studying for a GED test. It includes chapters on biology, earth science, chemistry, and physics. Each reading selection is followed by five multiple choice questions, similar to the format on the GED test. The lessons, however, are not related to one another, so no general explanation of the sciences is provided. One of the best aspects of this book is the study tips given in the introduction, in which the student is instructed in how to take notes while studying.

Mathematics

Teaching basic mathematics to adults is full of surprises. Assume nothing. Don't think that if students know their times tables and can multiply two-digit numbers that they can do addition and subtraction efficiently.

If you are wondering where to start with students, the first thing to do is to ask them what they feel they need to work on. Then give them some problems to solve on a lower level. Students are usually fairly accurate about what they think they know in math. Still, you will need to spend a little time in the beginning reviewing math that the students appear to be able to handle.

There are two levels of understanding basic math. One is knowing the times tables, formulas, and procedures for completing certain kinds of problems. Another level is knowing what the operations -- addition, subtraction, multiplication and division -- **mean.** Many students have memorized times tables and know, for example that 4x5=20. However, they may not know that 4x5 means 5 added 4 times, or 4 groups of 5. Likewise, they can know the procedure for long division and be able to complete problems, but have no idea of what they are really doing -- that they are taking a number and dividing that number into a certain number of groups of the same size. Ability to complete math problems is sometimes affected by confusion over something as simple as the signs $\pm$ — x ÷, which stand for the different operations.

Even word problems, which apply the concepts to practical situations, often do not get the idea across. Actual manipulation of objects often helps students see and understand the meaning behind the signs + — x ÷, a fraction, or a percentage.

Word problems can become obstacles for students. Many will complete pages of number problems correctly and understand them, but freeze when they come to word problems. Sometimes it's a reading problem: either word recognition or students' lack of confidence in their reading. For some people, it is a comprehension problem: they can read all the words, but they are unable to figure out what the problem is about and how to solve it. Here are some ways you can help your students better comprehend word problems:

- Draw a picture or diagram of the problem.
- Give students numbers to work with and have them compose word problems and write them out.
- Help your students pick out key words in the word problem that are clues to how to solve it. For instance, if the problem asks for a total, point out that that's a clue to add, then help them figure out what numbers to add and why.
- Be sure that when students arrive at an answer, they know what it means. Labelling the answer, or stating it in a sentence, helps. For instance, "She paid a total of $26 for the lumber." "450 chairs filled the room." "The carpeting cost $6. per square yard."

Several books in the Breakthrough to Math series helps students to pick out key words and comprehend word problems. *Word Problems with Whole Numbers* is very useful for these students. *Word Problems with Fractions, Decimals and Percents* and *Word Problems in Algebra* provide further hints and suggestions for more difficult math problems.

For general math instruction, *Number Power 1 & 2* are excellent. *Number Power* teaches addition, subtraction, multiplication and division clearly and has numerous pages of practice. There are also a lot of word problems and practical math sections on finding the perimeter and area of a rectangle and square, reading and computing restaurant menus, check cashing fees and calorie charts. Book 2 has the same qualities and covers fractions, decimals and percentage. Both volumes have the answers in the back for quick checking.

An alternative series to *Number Power* is *Figure it Out.* The explanations are longer and more detailed than those in *Number power.* This will be particularly helpful for teachers and tutors who are anxious about their own math skills. Word problems are not as plentiful, however.

GED

Courses of study in preparation for the GED test are a bit beyond the scope of this guide. Adult basic education is usually considered to be a foundation for studying for the GED test, but not to be a program which, in itself, prepares a student to take the test. Thus, we do not intend to go into detail on the various considerations of GED study. But since many adult basic education students are interested in the GED test, we looked at GED materials so that we could give you our recommendations.

GED books are designed to help students prepare to take the test. There are two publishers that publish substantially better books than any others we have seen, Contemporary and Cambridge. Each of these publishers provides GED preparation material in two formats, a large single book of five separate volumes, each oriented to one of the five GED tests. The separate books are a good idea. The single, large volume is somewhat awkward to use, but is sufficient for those whose skills are good but who need practice in test-taking.

The five-volume series published by both companies provides a more complete introduction to each subject in the GED test: math skills, writing skills, literature, science, and social studies. Cambridge also publishes the official GED practice test which includes tables for converting students' scores on the practice test into comparable GED scores.

Most students will need some extra help in one or more of the subjects, probably writing and math. The books described in earlier sections of this guide will be helpful in this regard.

It is difficult for students to know how to study for the other tests: the social studies, science, and literature tests. These are vast subjects; to become really knowledgeable about these would take more time than most students have to spend on GED preparation. On the other hand, many students feel insecure with single volumes which can only give the briefest summaries of these subjects. It is important for both you and your students to understand that for the most part, the GED tests for these subjects test not subject knowledge, but reading comprehension. It is also important to help students who want to pursue these subjects to

learn about the wide range of related materials available in public libraries. This is especially important for GED students who may not have plans for further formal education.

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HOW TO TEACH INTERMEDIATE LEVEL ADULTS:

SOME IDEAS AND OPINIONS

Opinion about what it takes to be a good teacher of adults varies widely. Some people believe that teaching is a vocation, a special calling. The opposite point of view is currently being expressed in an Ad Council campaign: "The only degree it takes is a degree of caring." In fact, the truth as we see it lies somewhere between these two extremes.

As we have worked on this project, we have talked to students, other adult educators, and each other about good teaching and good learning. In the following pages, we discuss some things that we think are very important for teachers and tutors.

One-to-one instruction versus small group instruction

The dynamics of a learning-teaching situation is affected not only by the personalities and attitudes of the participants but by the number of participants. Sometimes teachers and students have a choice of which situation to work in. Although there are advantages to both, we believe that at the intermediate level group instruction is beneficial for both teacher and students.

One-to-one tutoring is appealing in some ways. The instruction is more individualized for the student and is probably easier to manage for the teacher. There is no competition, so the student does not feel as though he or she has to keep up. One ABE student who was tutored at a basic literacy level and then moved into an ABE class said that one-to-one was good for her at the lower level because it helped her build confidence. She hated to read in front of anybody.

However, tutored students can feel isolated if they have little or no contact with other students. Many ABE students already have the feeling that they're the "only one" with a reading problem and one-to-one tutoring can perpetuate this idea.

This feeling of isolation can exacerbate another problem -- the imbalance of power and control in the teacher-student relationship.

The teacher is usually viewed as having the knowledge, the student as not having it. The effect can be that the teacher has almost complete control over what is learned and what materials are used. The tutor asks all the questions and the student must respond to all of them. She may feel reluctant to ask questions or to say what she wants to do in the lesson. As the ABE student mentioned above put it, "She was the teacher and I was the student. I just did what she told me to do. But with the class we had more input into what we did."

When there is a group of students the balance shifts more toward the middle. Although instruction is less individualized, each student has the benefit of learning from other students, feeling emotional support from them, and being less dependent on the teacher. The ABE student quoted above noted that sometimes another student explained something in class when the teacher's attempts had failed. She also said that because different viewpoints were expressed in class, she had to think more about her own opinions. In addition, when a student is absent or having trouble getting to class, another student can often help in a way the teacher cannot.

The emotional barriers to learning, the feelings of being stupid and unable to learn that many ABE students carry around with them, are often broken through more readily by other students than by a teacher. Sometimes finding out that "I'm not the only one" is all a student needs. Within a small community of learners an adult student may feel more like he has something to offer the learning situation. There is less pressure on the teacher, and the students learn more if they take responsibility for their learning and actively participate in shaping lesson content and activities.

Whether you work with one student or with a group, encouraging input from students requires teachers to be flexible. You will usually have a lesson plan in mind, but you need to be ready to revise it during the class. Lessons will take on an atmosphere of structured informality. And you will probably find yourself improvising sometimes to accommodate students interests and the flow of discussions.

When we discuss styles of teaching, we realize immediately that we are at a disadvantage because we don't know how much you, the teacher, know about this subject. To avoid confusion, we will begin at the beginning in an effort to tell you what we have discovered.

We have indicated that we consider small group instruction to be the best context for teaching and learning. Within this context, you will probably have an open group, one that will accept new students so long as the group does not become too large. In this case, you will be engaging in preliminaries with students over and over again. These preliminaries are simple. They include introductions and exchanges of information. For your part, you will want to tell students some things about the group: its time and place of meeting, its composition, its focus, and its philosophy. From students, you will want to get an idea of what they need to work on and at what pace they will be able to work.

This is the most fundamental part of beginning a teaching-learning relationship: discovering where a student needs to begin. The process of making this discovery will involve some gathering and exchange of information, but it will also involve more than that.

You will want to do your teaching in a way that involves real communication (as opposed to simply making a presentation which it will then be up to the students to either understand or not). So, too, in your beginnings with your students, you will want to relate in an informal and connected way.

Thus, your beginnings with each student will be a matter of making points of contact between his mind and yours. Learning and teaching will then develop as a kind of interaction between your minds and the materials you are studying.

There is no particular method that you need to follow in order to make these beginnings. They will result naturally from the social dimension of your and your student's relationship; they will develop, that is, from your getting to know each other. Since you are unique and since your student is unique, there is no way to fortell the ways and points at which your minds will meet. You will need to spend two or

three meetings together making a slow and tentative beginning: finding out what each of your students wants to study, finding out what you think they need to study, looking over materials, trying some reading and exercises, but, of equal importance, getting to know each other and establishing a mood of good will and cordiality.

Little by little and then more quickly you will center your attention on points in your students' studies which are for them both sticking and growth points. Each step that each student takes will be easier for him because his confidence and the communication between the two of you will be growing.

Your relationship with your students will include more than discussion of the subjects that they are studying. Nonetheless, this kind of discussion will be at the center of your relationship. So, as a student feels unclear about a particular concept, he will communicate that to you, hoping that between the two of you and with the help of others in the class, you can make things clear. And you will. In this sense, your relationship will move through periods of being clear and unclear and then clear again. Yet, overall it will be a progressive and flowering relationship, one that develops continuously into areas of understanding which no one expected.

This sort of complex and progressive relationship will grow merely from your caring about your students' learning and your being patient enough to let the points of contact between you develop in a natural way. Students agree that this is the important thing. One of us recently found herself talking with her students about what they thought made a good teacher. All of the students agreed that what matters is a teacher's truly caring that students learn.

Aside from these generalizations, it is hard for us to tell you what to expect in your relationships with your students. Too broad a range exists in the backgrounds, points-of-view, and interests of the students; the same is true of teachers and tutors. Much of what has been written about adults who have not yet developed their reading and mathematical skills assumes that they are people who have experienced poverty and discrimination of one kind or another. In our experience, this has proved to be true more times than not. Still, it is not rare for a student to come from a privileged family and from a race and ethnicity against

which there is little or no discrimination. Sometimes a tutor and a student are from the same background; occasionally a student's background has been one that has offered greater opportunities than that of the tutor; most commonly it is the other way around. Yet it is unpredictable. To discover the differences between your and your students' worlds you will have to get to know each other.

Still, there is a good chance that you will be working with minority students and, if you do, it will be important for you to understand that they have special problems.

What is the proper role and manner of a teacher of adult minority students? In recent years, this has been a subject of intense discussion among educators of adults. What brought this subject into question was the recognition that our system of public education has often failed to do justice to minority students. Adult educators who dealt with adult students who had experienced failure in public schools began to realize that new approaches were needed if failure was not to recur.

It cannot be denied that the tendency to treat poor people poorly and the tendency to treat minority people as outsiders remains all too common. Thus, extra efforts of teachers to make up for these tendencies have been well received by students and have become an established part of the practice of adult education.

But the attitudes regarding disadvantaged students which today seem a matter of obvious moral necessity were, some twenty-five years ago, experimental and barely known to most educators. Experiments took place in widely separated places: among groups of peasants in Brazil, in an old church in Harlem, in the poorer neighborhoods of Havana, at Freedom Schools in Mississippi. The experiments had to do with changes in the style and atmosphere of teaching and learning more than with changes in what was being taught and learned. (This distinction may be somewhat misleading, however, since changes in one of these will eventually bring about changes in the other.) The teachers were basing their approach on their love for and understanding of their students. Therefore, they questioned whether formality, a rigid curriculum, and disciplinary action for mistakes created good learning experiences. Instead, they worked toward a kind of purposeful informality with their students. These teachers believed that students

learned more when they enjoyed and felt comfortable with learning. They put learning first by adjusting curricula to suit students' interests and paces of learning. They became students of their students so that they could learn what reality was from their students' points of view. They did this on the assumption that the students' points of view were as valid as any other people's and that these points of view were the students' only basis for interpreting the literature, history, math, science, and other subjects that they would be studying.

It did not take mainstream educators long to hear about these experiments. By the late 1960's, these points of view had become well known and experimentation had become widespread, not only in adult education but also in the education of the young people. But by the mid-1970's, innovations in the education of children -- open classrooms, novel curricula, emphasis on expressivity -- were causing a public reaction, which by the end of the 1970's became a demand for a return to traditional methods. This was not the case, however, in adult education.

Teachers of adults saw that the previous school experiences of nearly all of their students had been some combination of confusion, abuse, failure, withdrawal, and exclusion. Most of their adult students had come away from their previous schooling believing that they were responsible for the poor education to which they had been subjected. It was obvious to teachers that they needed to reform their students' sense of what a teaching-learning experience should be. And the educational reforms of the 1960's and 1970's proved to be effective ways of doing that.

Ideas about adult education which were little known twenty-five years ago are now part of the mainstream of the philosophy of adult education. Today these ideas are seldom challenged overtly. No one insists that adult students should be made to buckle under to the authority of teachers and curricula and either come out "winners" or "losers." These days, if you attend a course on teaching or tutoring adults, you will almost assuredly receive training in the new approaches and style of teaching.

We think this is appropriate, but we also think that these new approaches in teaching are occasionally being misused by a small

number of often well-meaning adult educators. As we describe new approaches and styles of teaching, therefore, we will also point out some misuses of these new ideas.

Adult educators who practice new methods in adult education have suggested that minority students should not be taught to assimilate the positive-minded, essentially non-critical style of privileged groups simply so that they can pass for being "safely employable." They have suggested that such students be encouraged to give expression to what they have actually seen and experienced in life. They hold that the materials used in courses for such students should include literature and interpretations of history that validate their sense of life. They propose that students be encouraged to clarify an understanding of life that is intrinsic to how they and their families have had to live, and that they be encouraged to honor this understanding as the foundation of their further learning.

As we have said, these goals are no longer in controversy. They have been accepted by nearly all educators of adults. We think you will accept them, too, once you begin to work with your students. You will find that most of your students are very insecure about learning from books and from an "educated" person. Many of them, you will discover, have been taught to conspire against themselves in the belief that they cannot learn. Thus, one of your first and most important tasks will be to help them teach themselves that they can learn, help them learn that they have the power and ability to learn whatever they want to learn without depending on you or anyone else.

This will vastly affect how you carry on your teaching. It means that it will be important for you to help your students look at their way of life as a way which is, as it is, a sufficient place in which to discover a human being who is fully qualified to receive all the attention, all the respect, all the love, and all the opportunities to which other human beings in other circumstances are entitled.

To do this, you will need to get your students to express themselves, and you will need to find in yourself appreciation for what they express. To get your students to express themselves, it will be helpful if you can establish a dialogue with them about yourselves. You can do this by giving them, little-by-little, an unidealized version of yourself, one that

includes some of your doubts and fears and some sense that, like them, there is much of life that you do not understand. In doing these things you will be equalizing your and your students' roles. You will be giving up speaking as an authority and will be presenting yourself to your students as a fellow learner.

There are, however, limits to how far you can go in this. In subjects such as mathematics and grammar there is not much room for interpretation. You will be an authority, relative to your students, on these matters. Still, when you do not know something, it will be good if you say that you do not. Then you can ask your students to join you in finding the right answer.

In these and other ways, educators urge that you respect and support your students' power to take control of their learning. This approach to teaching and learning is sometimes called learner-centered education. When it is used in a comparative sense this is a useful term. That is, when one compares the goals of traditional adult education with those of contemporary education, one can say that the former are more teacher and curriculum-centered while the latter are more learner-centered.

However, the learner-centered aspect of education is sometimes used as an absolute value. Some teachers believe that everything in a teaching-learning situation should be centered on the student. We think this is an oversimplification that may be misleading to new teachers.

The term "facilitator" creates the same problem. This term, too, has developed from criticism of the traditional teaching role, particularly in its disciplinarian and authoritarian aspects. Looking at teaching from this point of view and focusing on the damage that it has done, some educators have gone so far as to condemn the idea of teaching. They prefer to think that their only value to students lies in facilitating students' goals and points of view. They advocate that the "facilitator" see himself or herself merely as a resource to students' interests.

For a teacher to believe that everything in a teaching-learning situation should be centered on the student is, we think, a kind of oversimplification. A teaching-learning situation should not be absolutely teacher-centered, but neither should it be absolutely learner-centered or absolutely curriculum-centered. All three of these -- teacher, learner,

curriculum -- are present in teaching and learning. The movement of your and your students' attention between these three things will make the moments you share multi-centered. One of your tasks will be to balance these shifts of attention so that each aspect of the learning situation -- you, your students, and the curriculum -- plays its part.

It is true that teachers and tutors who follow the models they remember from public school are prone to do too much teaching and not enough waiting for the student to develop an interpretation of his own. But this does not mean that, in order to avoid this, a teacher should not express her own feelings, interests, and points of view.

This will be a point of tension in your teaching that will not go away -- the tension between your being a listener and learner and your being a teacher. In some instances, having encouraged students to talk about their interests, you will find yourself feeling that you really should draw their and your attention back to whatever it was you were studying. You will recall that you only have a few hours to work together each week and you will feel obligated to use some of that time to advance your students' studies. So you may tactfully move your students' attention from what they are talking about to the subject of your meeting. Or you may not. But you will consider it, and sometimes you will redirect what is being talked about. And, when you do, the moment you are sharing with your student will become teacher-centered.

Other times, you will hear a student expressing hate, prejudice, excuses for being irresponsible, or simply incorrect information. And if no other students are present or willing to question what has been said, you will question it. And, again, when you do, the moment will become teacher-centered. At other times, you will feel that you should explain something, or you will feel like relating what is being studied to something you care about, or, because you are particularly happy or particularly sad, you may simply feel like talking. These will all be occasions of teacher-centeredness.

Many other times, you will feel like you are directing things too much and that you are not encouraging the students to express themselves. You will feel as if you have gone too far in directing things toward your goals and as if you have not surrendered enough to how your students would like to spend their time with you.

There is no formula for avoiding these conflicts. You cannot make them go away by trying to make your relationship with your students be either all about your teaching or all about their learning. You are as important in the relationship as your students are: you bring as much to it as they do: and they will be as interested in you as you are in them. For the relationship to be as full and fruitful as it can be, you and your students must all participate fully and you must all deal with the tension that exists between sometimes limiting yourselves and sometimes expressing yourselves just as you would in any relationship. A good teacher listens and encourages students to accept, value, and express themselves; and a good teacher has things of his or her own to offer, not just about the subject matter at hand, but about life and the world; and a good teacher teaches students these things.

Along with "learner-centered" and "facilitator", "empowerment" is a term that has been both used and abused in adult education. "Empowerment" comes from the verb, "to empower", and one of the problems with its use lies in its implied subject and indirect objects: "**We** will empower you with **what you need** to be complete and what you need to do justice to yourself." Used in this way the word is presumptuous, self-aggrandizing, and misleading. At the same time it offers no guidance to a teacher with regard to the choices he or she must make as to style, content, and method of teaching.

Students, you will find, are already complete; they come previously endowed with humanity, sometimes more humanity than a teacher can bear. Furthermore, since life is not a neat series of limited problems, it is not primarily solutions, answers, or information that these adults need to become more fully all that they were meant to be. What they need or will want cannot be imagined, much less given, in total, by someone else. They will work it out for themselves. For now, for a few hours a week, you and they will spend some time together, giving to each other and helping each other. To some extent, your lives will come together. But neither of you will be the empowerment of the other. Each of you is already empowered -- although neither of you is empowered enough to complete your lives separately.

So far we have been speaking of personal power. There is also social power. This kind of power is related to education. Reading and talking about what one has read can expand a person's understanding of

the world, and this may help give a person confidence to try to use his power in ways that he or she has not used it before. However, your students know that results do not necessarily follow action. For them, new understanding may not necessarily create a hope that action based on that understanding will bring improvements in their way of life.

The assumption that action will bring about expected results is based on a person's being part of a privileged group. Such a person does ordinarily get results from his actions. He does partly because he knows how to indicate that he is the sort of person for whom results should be forthcoming. But he also gets results because he knows, at least semiconsciously, what kinds of results it is appropriate for him to take for granted and what kinds it is not. And he is willing not to insist upon what he cannot have.

Most minority students know that this is the way it is. Maybe not in so many words, but they know. For a long, long time they have seen and understood that something should be done about certain recurring and worsening social realities -- the lives of people around them being wasted and, worse, being ground down, past pain and desperation, to sheer escapism. They have heard important people talk about these realities and have heard promises that action would be taken, yet they continue to live with the same realities. They have also seen people from their parts of town organize and take action to try to bring about changes in the conditions under which they live. And they have seen that, for all the energy put into these actions, there have been almost no results.

This will have been the experience of most minority students, and it should be honored. It is not that they are hopeless or resigned; it is that they are realistic about the connection between new ideas and the power to change things. The traditional attitude of wholesome optimism with regard to the relationship between education and action --"There is nothing you can't do with a sound education." -- does not do justice to what many students know about life.

Optimistic coupling of education and power by privileged people and their urging of this optimism onto minority students seems to us to be a misuse of adult education. Sometimes it is a misuse born of simple misunderstanding of the differences in people's circumstances. At

other times, however, this misuse may arise from something less innocent: privileged people may be defining empowerment to mean showing minority students how they can become part of privileged society. This is using minority students to validate privileged society's way of life. It is wrong because it denies the separate validity of student's social realities. It is wrong because it may hinder poor and excluded people from realizing aspirations which are more in keeping with their sense of social reality and which may have a greater potential than mainstream aspirations for bringing about a morally fruitful way of life.

But we are oversimplifying. It is not a matter of choosing between mainstream and minority cultures. Privilege is bad only when it is not used for the good of others. Many parts of our mainstream culture do justice to and provide insight into what it means to be a human being. And, on the other hand, there are disadvantaged aspects of minority cultures which minority students could just as well do without. It is not a question of either honoring one's culture and way of life or assimilating to mainstream culture. It is a matter of doing both with a sense of balance and judgment.

As a teacher, you will want to encourage minority students to value their own way of life, but at the same time you will want to encourage them to take part in mainstream culture. You will want to help them to fulfill their desire to cross over and participate in both cultures. So, if you can manage it, you will want to express a generally positive attitude toward both mainstream and minority cultures. But, ideally, your optimism should not be so aggressive that it refuses to see that there are some things that are wrong with our society.

Minority students will probably have learned to gather and hold onto their strength and hopefulness without resorting to illusory identifications of education with action and results. To insist that they give up this achievement and express themselves in bland optimism would be to force them to contort their sense of reality to the point of grotesqueness.

Thus, we feel that it would be better for a teacher to separate the values of learning from the values of acquiring power. Stressing the separate satisfactions of learning and of acquiring power will be more in

keeping with the student's sense of reality. It will be more in keeping with everyone's sense of reality.

Learning is a fundamental human activity. One does not need a reason to do it; one does it because one is human. Your students have as much right as anyone to be encouraged to realize this and to make learning for its own sake part of their way of life. As all the parts of one's life are connected, learning is connected to other things: to taking moral action, to getting a job, to self-respect. You and your students may talk about these connections. But we think treating learning as a separate part of life is the most appropriate basis for a teacher-student relationship because it allows the relationship the utmost of fullness and freedom. To tie learning to the acquisition of power or the acquisition of a job impoverishes the teacher-student relationship and it impoverishes the place of learning in students' lives.

We are against treating learning as something that is exclusively cumulative. Although it is cumulative in some ways, we do not think these are the most important aspects of learning. The important thing about learning is the experience itself, the experience of a mind opening, reaching out, making contact, and rearranging itself. Another important part of learning is the experience of reading the work of writers who have taken certain complex or troubling parts of reality into their hearts and minds and have clarified and interpreted them as words printed on a page. Watching other people learning -- fellow students and teachers -- seeing the spirit and method that they bring to learning is important. And the development of confidence in one's intelligence and moral sense is an important part of learning.

Less important than these things is the ability to recite answers other people have given to questions other people have posed. This is the part of learning that test-taking assesses. And, although it has its place, we think that you should indicate to your student where this place ranks in comparison to other aspects of your teaching-learning relationship.

There are different reasons for trying to measure a student's abilities to do certain things. One is to give administrators the numbers they need to estimate program needs, to satisfy funding requirements, or to create dramatic statistical stories for public relations purposes. Tests are well-suited for these purposes, and the best test is the one that works backwards from the particular administrative need to the student.

However, even though they may be necessary, tests can provoke anxiety and depression in students. They may make students feel that they are subject to a world that cares about them only to the extent that they are able to express themselves through its formal, impersonal tests. You can help alleviate these feelings by discussing at the beginning of your relationship whatever tests you may be required to give your students. Well in advance of when they will actually have to take a test, explain why your program has to give tests; let your students look at the tests; ask them to participate in the decision-making as to how and when the test will be given; and show your students by your attitude and words that you do not think that how they score on a test has anything to do with their being capable of learning or with the appropriateness of their way of learning.

Another reason for assessing your students is to discover their reading level and where they need to begin their studies of mathematics and grammar. We think it is best to make these kinds of assessments informally. In the case of mathematics, this can be done by telling your students that you need to get an idea of what they need to work on and asking them if they can tell you. This will probably let you know that they are not yet ready to work on percentage, geometry, or algebra problems because they first need to work on basic arithmetic, fractions or decimals. You can narrow this down more closely by giving each student problems in different areas of arithmetic one at a time in an informal way. This estimate will be close enough so that you will know what book and what section of that book each student needs to begin working in. As you begin to work together in the book, you will get a precise idea of what he or she needs to work on.

We think that this sort of informal process is a much better method for discovering where your student needs to begin his or her studies than are formal skills inventory tests. Tests arouse anxiety, and teachers tend to leave students alone with tests so as to not increase that anxiety. Thus, all that the teacher gets from a test is what a student writes on his answer sheet. But by using the informal method the teacher becomes part of the process and can be present to see which steps in problem-solving are difficult for a student.

A similar method is best for getting a student started in his or her study of English usage, grammar, and punctuation. Books on these subjects usually come with skills inventory tests. We recommend that you tell your students to skip these and instead, try one or two exercises in the first section of the book. You will be able to tell if this is easy or not for him because you will be right there watching how he is doing. If it is easy, have him try another section.

Informal assessment also works best for determining a student's reading level. To do this kind of assessment, all you need are some books written at different reading levels. The series of Laubach books are good for this purpose for students with limited skills. For other students, begin with the easiest books in the ABE curriculum. Ask your student to read aloud a short paragraph in one of the books. If she is having trouble with several words in every sentence, ask her to read a paragraph from a lower level book. Or, if she reads through the passage

quickly and easily, ask her to read from a more difficult book. As the student is reading, you can see if she uses phonics to figure out words that are hard for her or if she relies strictly on sight-reading. If she does use phonics, you can begin to get an idea of how advanced she is in the use of this reading skill. You may also get some idea of whether your student has any special problems.

But in your first meeting with your students these sorts of assessments are not very important. You will develop, refine, and begin to address these aspects of your students' reading in later meetings. Your primary interest in your first meeting will be to get your students started reading and to give them a book or books to take home with them. The books should be interesting to them and not so difficult as to be frustrating or so easy as to be unchallenging. If you can do this, you will have made a good beginning. Further assessment can come in a natural, informal way as you work through some reading exercises together.

The other aspect of your students' learning that you will want to assess will be how they feel about it. You will want to find out what is interesting and what is boring, what is offensive or frightening and what is comfortable and enjoyable. The only way for you to find out is to develop a close enough relationship with your students that they come to trust you enough to let you know.

As you work with your students, you will find that assessment is an ongoing process. Once you establish a starting point, you will not proceed in a straight line from there. Most likely, it will be necessary to review things that you assumed were known. There are gaps and inconsistencies in adult students' abilities to read, write and do math, and in their knowledge of history, science, grammar, and spelling. Most students' writing ability is much lower than their reading skills. You may find that they know some seemingly difficult words, and then have trouble with words that are more common and should be easier. The knowledge of some aspect of history or their ability to spell may surprise you. Educational development is affected by school experience and life experience. And, particularly among adults, these vary widely.

HOW YOUR LIBRARY CAN HELP YOU*

The public library is an important resource for tutors and their students. In fact, it is one of the most important resources available to us, third only to the instructional materials we use in our lessons and the knowledge we get from other experienced tutors and trainers.

Those of us who live in communities in which public libraries are deeply involved in literacy activities may take the role of the library for granted. The rest of us may not have even considered the opportunities for learning which libraries offer. Putting aside the literacy programs that libraries may be providing, let us explore what traditional public library services can offer us and our students.

The public library is the People's University. It is a place where the world's best and most thought-provoking writing is not only stored but is also made available for everyone in the community to use. Here, adult learners can practice their newly-acquired skills. Here they can begin to open the doors that were closed to them as nonreaders. In the public library, they have access to educational, recreational, informational, and cultural resources that can change their lives.

How can students and tutors make use of public library services? First, it is important to remember that every library is special, and every library is different. In fact, in larger communities, you may have more than one public library from which to choose. Pick the one that will be easiest for your student to reach and to use.

Before taking your student to the public library, you may need to do a little exploring yourself, becoming familiar with the layout of the building, the hours of service, accessibility by public transportation, and other pertinent information. This would also be a good time to introduce yourself to the library clerk or assistant. As the person who has closest contact with the public, she may be the best person to ask about library hours and rules.

*This section first appeared in 1984 as chapter 16 of the *Handbook for Volunteer Reading Aides*, edited by Martha A. Lane, and published by Lutheran Church Women, 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia PA 19129. Our thanks to LCW for permission to edit it slightly and reprint it.

You should also introduce yourself to the librarian; in a large library there may be several and you will eventually get to know most of them. Talk to the librarian about your plans for exploring and using the library with your students. She or he may have ideas about parts of the library and its materials that would be particularly interesting. You and the librarian will want to decide the most appropriate time to introduce your students to the library staff.

General Information About Libraries

The next thing you should do is look around the library. While you may want to save some exploration for a later visit with your students, you should at least get a general idea of:

- the catalog
- the arrangement of books and other library materials
- the location of magazines, newspapers, and microfilm
- special collections and where they are housed
- audio-visual material -- recordings, films, etc.

All public libraries have catalogs of their materials. Catalogs may, in this technological age, be on computers, on microfiche, in book form, or in card files. The essential thing to remember is that, whatever their format, catalogues all serve the same purpose: to help people find the materials they want.

You might want to ask the librarian or library assistant to show you how the catalog works in your library. Catalogs may be arranged in one of several ways:

- all one alphabet
- separate adult and children's cataogs
- separate catalogs for authors, titles, or subjects

Even the simplest catalogs, those that have everything filed together in one alphabet, can be a little confusing, because librarians sometimes alphabetize differently from the rest of us. If you can't find what you are

looking for, always ask the library staff to help you -- it's their job.

Most books can be found in the library's catalog in three ways: by author, by title, and by subject. Once you have found the book in the catalog, the next step is to find it in the library. The catalog tells you how to do this.

To the left of the book title, or before or after the entry, there will be a location symbol. It could be a series of numbers and letters, like these:

541.5 or 915.6 or 327.42 F66
R66 Sa5i

The location symbol might also be "F" or "Fiction", or "B" or "Bio" or "Biography". Your library should have signs to show you the location to which these symbols refer.

The books in your public library are probably arranged using the Dewey Demimal Classification System. This means that the books that are similar in subject will be close together on the library shelves. Also, every book in your library has a different number. Even books on the same subject by the same writer will have a slightly different number, so that they can be located easily.

These are the general categories in the Dewey Decimal System:

000-099	general subjects, including encyclopedias
100-199	philosophy and psychology
200-299	religion and mythology
300-399	social sciences, including economics and education
400-499	language, including dictionaries in English and in other languages
500-599	science
600-699	applied science, including medicine, gardening, home economics, and business
700-799	fine arts, including photography, movies and television, and music (and for some strange reason, sports!)
800-899	literature

900-999 history and travel

Fiction is usually separate from nonfiction. Some libraries also put biographies and autobiographies in a separate section.

If you come to the library often, you will learn to find some of your favorite subjects without looking them up in the catalog. You may already know that cookbooks, for example, are in section 641, or that sports books are shelved in section 796.

Visit The Library With Your Student

You have probably realized by now that to use the library independently, your students will need to be fairly proficient and confident readers. It is important, however, that students become comfortable and familiar with the library gradually, so that their library skills can grow along with their reading skills.

The best way to make sure that your students have the library skills that they will need to become independent library users is to prepare library lessons based on both the needs and interests of your students and the resources of your public library. In the beginning, you will need to accompany students on every library visit. As your students become better readers, you may want to suggest independent work in the library.

The following suggestions for library lessons are arranged in order of difficulty. You can schedule them to fit your students' needs.

1. **The first visit**

   This should be a brief exploratory visit. Try to focus on some particular student interests. Sit down and look at magazines or well-illustrated books on these subjects.

2. **Magazines and newspapers.**

   A few of these may be familar to your students, but most public libraries subscribe to dozens of periodicals, some of which will be of special interest. Moreover, many magazines are so well-

illustrated that they can be enjoyed even by beginning readers.

3. **Reference books.**

   These can be the basis for countless library visits. Your students need to know that many of their information needs can be answered at the library. Start with dictionaries, encyclopedias, and almanacs, and don't try to do too much in any one visit. As your students' skills improve, move on to information on specific subjects. At this stage, you should begin to use a periodical index, which will help you find articles on specific topics in magazines. Arrange in advance for a library staff member to help you and your students learn to use these helpful tools.

4. **The catalog.**

   This is the key to the library. When your students know how to look for books in the catalog and locate them on the shelves, they can use the library independently.

5. **Specific information.**

   Keep track of the questions and interests of your students, and make them into library projects. In early visits, you may need to find the answers for them. Later, you may assign specific tasks to students. Short, factual questions are easiest for beginning assignments. Sports statistics, biographical information, recipes, or movie reviews are good examples. Later, more complex questions on topics like nutrition, legal rights, or money management might be investigated. The most difficult assignment is to locate information on one topic in several sources. Always use student needs and interests as the basis for such assignments.

6. **Special library services.**

   Some public libraries have career counselling services, job lines, and learners advisory services. Many libraries have recordings and films that can be borrowed. Some libraries have computers for public use. Ask the library staff about special programs that will be of interest to you and your students. Some libraries have informative, entertaining programs on

topics as diverse as home repair, old movies, and money management.

As you can see, library lessons can take up a great deal of time and energy. They are worth all of your efforts, however, because your students need to know how to continue to use and improve their learning skills, regardless of whether or not they intend to continue formal education.

Here are a few more suggestions:

- Get a library card for you and your students, preferably on the first visit. Avoid embarrassing your students -- know what information will be requested on the application and help them gather that information in advance.
- Do not be embarrassed if you don't know everything there is to know about your public library. The staff is employed to help you. Library lessons will give you a chance to learn and grow with your students.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this curriculum guide will prove useful to you. We have tried to deal with a philosophy of teaching adult basic education as well as some specific materials and techniques that can be used in an ABE setting. We have stressed the use of a public library setting because that is our field of expertise. While there are many philosophies of education as well as many methodologies of teaching, we hope that the specifics of this guide will be fruitful and will aid you in your teaching endeavors.